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ABSTRACT

Work force development systems have three primary subsystems: youth development and preparation for employment, adult work force entry, and worker retraining and transition assistance. Programs targeting youth pose one of the greatest challenges to those striving to develop or improve work force development systems. School-to-work will not significantly improve career opportunities unless it is viewed as an effort to combine, improve, and expand existing programs and initiatives to meet the needs of young people in a more integrated and comprehensive manner. The following are key strategies for linking school-to-work with other education and training initiatives to form a comprehensive system providing all youths with pathways to successful careers: establish human resource investment councils; build community-wide collaboration; use existing initiatives and resources to serve at-risk and out-of-school youth; develop occupational skill standards and certifications; and improve labor market information systems. North Carolina's JobReady school-to-work and one-stop career centers initiatives and San Diego's school-to-work initiative, which is integrated with the Job Training Partnership Act summer youth employment and training programs, contain examples of effective practices in the area of linking school-to-work and work force development. (Contains an annotated list of seven resource organizations to contact for further assistance and seven references.) (MN)

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SCHOOL TO WORK OPPORTUNITIES

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★RESOURCE BULLETIN

JANUARY 1997

School-to-Work and Workforce Development

For more than 35 years, the federal government has been working with states and communities to enhance the skills and abilities of our nation's workforce. More than 100 federal education and training programs, administered by 14 federal agencies, have been established since the enactment of the first federal job training initiative. In recent years, the federal government has encouraged states and communities to coordinate the administration and delivery of their education and training programs with the aim of developing a comprehensive workforce development system. The purpose of coordinating these disparate programs into a workforce development system is to provide every youth and adult with a seamless progression of opportunities to upgrade their skills, and in turn, to provide employers with the skilled workers necessary to be competitive in the global economy.

Workforce development systems have three primary sub-systems--youth development and preparation for employment, adult workforce entry, and worker retraining and transition assistance. One of the greatest challenges facing those striving to develop workforce development systems is to restructure and improve programs targeting youth. For many young people, the existing education system and array of second-chance education and training programs have provided limited prospects for career development and the transition to high-skill, high-wage employment. In response, President Clinton signed into law the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994, providing a framework to coordinate a range of programs and initiatives aimed at preparing all youth for productive careers and lifelong learning.

School-to-work will not significantly improve career opportunities for all youth if it is thought of as just another new program. Instead, school-to-work should be understood as an effort to combine, improve, and expand existing programs and initiatives to meet the needs of young people in a more integrated and comprehensive manner. The collaborative nature of school-to-work provides different stakeholders the opportunity to break free of categorical program limitations and to explore new ways of organizing and delivering education and training for all youth. School-to-work partnerships can encourage the coordination of different funding sources and can help different stakeholders, such as government agencies, community-based organizations, social service providers, employers, and organized labor work together to achieve common goals. This bulletin provides strategies that help link school-to-work with other education and training initiatives to form a comprehensive system providing all youth with pathways to a successful career.

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Strategies

Establish human resource investment councils. Many states have created human resource investment councils to establish objectives, policy, and strategies for comprehensive workforce development systems. The councils review state plans for each of the federal programs under their jurisdiction, including School-to-Work, JTPA, Job Opportunities and Basic Skills, The Carl Perkins Act, the Adult Education Act, Food Stamp Employment and Training, and National and Community Service Act. The councils' collaborative planning and review processes promote information sharing and leveraging of resources among the different programs and agencies. Many of the councils also monitor and evaluate program performance, and some have the authority to review program budgets. According to a 1996 National Governors' Association survey, twenty-nine states have created councils and eight others are in the process of doing so. Several councils have school-to-work subcommittees that focus on the role of school-to-work in workforce development systems, while others have significant cross-membership with separate school-to-work advisory councils.

To help adapt state workforce policies to local areas, thirteen states have authorized regional or local workforce councils that correspond to state-level councils. A key activity of these councils is to identify growth industries and demand occupations in their area, and to help target resources, including school-to-work initiatives, in these areas. In many states, Private Industry Councils (PICs), the local employer-led boards authorized and funded under JTPA, have been asked to expand their authority and become workforce development councils. In other instances, PICs only continue to oversee JTPA funds, and constitute a subcommittee of the regional or local council. A recent National Association of Private Industry Council survey found that PICs play a "major" role in school-to-work in 54 percent of local areas, a role that includes plan approval, budget approval, and/or filling the formal connecting activities role in school-to-work systems.

Building community-wide collaboration. Linking school-to-work and other workforce development initiatives with community-based organizations can provide access to a wide range of support services such as transportation, food, clothing, work clothes, shelter, child care, and substance abuse prevention and treatment. They can also build community involvement, and help coordinate employer recruitment in workforce development systems. Community-based strategies such as community mapping and assessment can help school-to-work systems identify work-based learning opportunities and identify successful local programs and initiatives that can be included in collaborative planning and oversight councils.

An example of a community-based partnership that coordinates school-to-work and a wide range of youth-serving programs and institutions is the federal Youth Fair Chance (YFC) initiative. YFC initiatives coordinate a variety of services to focus on such youth problems as dropping out of school, teen pregnancy, drug and gang involvement, employment and training, lack of sports and recreation, family support, child development and health. Both the in-school and out-of-school education and training elements of YFC initiatives incorporate school-to-work principles, and many YFC sites work with school-to-work initiatives as part of a larger community development initiative.

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Utilize existing initiatives and resources to serve at-risk and out-of-school youth. Incorporating the variety of disconnected second-chance programs into a streamlined, sequential progression of opportunities to acquire education and job skills can significantly improve employment prospects for at-risk and out-of-school youth. One strategy that has been explored is linking JTPA year-round programs with school-to-work systems. JTPA year-round programs are used to enhance at-risk or out-of-school students' basic educational and occupational skills, to increase their employment and earnings, and to address problems that impair their ability to make a successful transition from school to work. Services are generally provided through community-based organizations, educational institutions, private training establishments, or businesses, and are administered by a local government agency or PIC. The coordination of school-to-work and JTPA year-round programs can help ensure that at-risk and out-of-school youth have access to a greater variety of opportunities for school-based and work-based learning. Another innovative strategy is to extend JTPA summer youth programs into a progression of career related jobs or internships in a career pathway. Some school-to-work initiatives lack a summer component, and these programs can provide summer employment or education and training for eligible youth.

A relatively unexplored option is the possibility of allowing state per-pupil education funds to "follow" a student to learning options outside the traditional school setting. A recent National Conference of State Legislatures study entitled *State Education Funding Practices and School-to-Work Transitions for Dropouts and At-Risk Students* found that while the majority of state funding policies are unclear on funding "following" a student, many existing programs and opportunities could be funded in this manner to support at-risk and out-of-school youth in school-to-work systems.

Develop occupational skill standards and certifications. Skill standards can link school-to-work and workforce development systems by providing a common system of standards and credentials for students, out-of school youth, and adults seeking to enter the workforce or upgrade their skills. A central issue facing school-to-work and workforce development systems is how to establish a centralized mechanism to develop and validate skill standards. A national effort led by the National Skill Standards Board is underway to encourage the development of voluntary, nationally recognized occupational skill standards in several occupational clusters. Several states have supported the development of occupational standards to link the content of state education and training programs to the demands of regional industries.

Improve labor market information systems. School-to-work and workforce development systems are most effective when they are designed and structured to match the needs of the labor market. Accurate, up-to-date labor market information can ensure that school-to-work and workforce development initiatives make appropriate decisions on targeting occupations and growth industries, and that they can provide youth and adults entering the workforce an accurate picture of opportunities available in the labor market. Many innovative state and local workforce development systems have established "One-Stop"centers that provide a convenient, well-known point of access to a comprehensive range of education, training, and support services. A critical component of the "One-Stop" is an innovative labor market information systems where youth, workers, and employers can get the information and assistance they need to make good labor market choices.

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Effective Practices

In **North Carolina**, the Governor's Commission of Workforce Preparedness administers the state's school-to-work initiative, "JobReady," and its One-stop Career Centers initiative, in addition to a variety of other employment and training initiativies. The state school-to-work oversight body, the JobReady Partnership Council operates under the auspices of the Governor's Commission, and has a 51 percent business representation to provide leadership and secure support in the business community. 16 of the JobReady Council's 27 members also serve on the Governor's Commission. Representatives of the Departments of Public Instruction, Labor, and Commerce and the community college system form the core implementation team and work with the business leaders to identify new opportunites to expand the school-to-work system.

At the regional level, the Governor reconstituted the State's 25 Private Industry Councils into regional Workforce Development Boards. The workforce boards review and approve grant proposals from the local school-to-work partnerships in their region. The local school-to-work partnerships are required to have representation from the regional board to facilitate communication and information sharing through the different levels of the school-to-work system

The **San Diego** school-to-work initiative is integrated with the JTPA summer youth employment and training programs. Forty five percent of the JTPA summer youth program funds are designated for the school-to-work initiative, serving 1243 youth last year. The school-to-work summer program places students from the local school's school-to-work initiative in jobs within the career cluster in which the student has demonstrated interest and aptitude. Service providers work directly with the schools to identify students in the school-to-work initiative who are interested in working during the summer. The career clusters in which the students are placed are identified on the basis of labor market information and PIC analysis.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC, CONSULT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

Effective Practices

North Carolina. Loretta Martin, School-to-Work Transition, 116 West Jones Street, Commission on Workforce Preparedness, Raleigh, NC 27603-8001 ★ (919) 715-3300.

San Diego. Cyd Spikes, San Diego Consortium and Private Industry Council, 1551 Fourth Avenue, Suite 600, San Diego, CA 92101 ★ (619) 238-1445.

Organizations

Center for Human Resources (CHR) at Brandeis University works to improve the quality of employment preparation and education services by combining knowledge gained from scholarly research and practical experience in ways that help policy makers successfully address the issues of long-term self-sufficiency

for youth and young adults. CHR has worked to create community-wide strategies linking education reform, workforce preparation and economic development, and provides technical assistance to the U.S. DOL sponsored Youth Fair Chance sites. Brandeis University, Center for Human Resources, 60 Turner Street, Waltham, MA 02154 ★ (617) 736-3770

KRA Corporation focuses on the application of the social and behavioral sciences to support policy making, planning, service delivery and management, particularly in the areas of youth programs. This emphasis reflects the commitment of the division's staff to work in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies, and the private sector, to develop effective new systems and to improve the quality of existing youth programs and to create new ones where appropriate. KRA is the prime contractor for the Youth Fair Chance Technical Assistance contract. 1010 Wayne Avenue, Suite 850, Silver Spring, MD 20910. (301) 495-1591

National Association of Private Industry Councils (NAPIC) represents the interests of the nation's Private Industry Councils, local public-private partnership groups charged under the federal Job Training Partnership Act with planning and overseeing education, job training, and employment programs. NAPIC supports and promotes the work of its members through a comprehensive program of advocacy, technical assistance, and communications activities. 1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20005 ★ (202) 289-2950.

National Center for Education and the Economy's Workforce Skills Program is working to build a human resources investment system in the United States by helping to implement a single comprehensive system for general, professional and technical education the meets the needs of everyone from high school students to dislocated workers, from the hard-core unemployed to working adults who want to improve their skills. 700 Eleventh Street, NW, Suite 750, Washington, DC 20001 ★ (202) 783-3668.

National Governors' Association (NGA) supports the work of the nation's Governors by providing a bipartisan forum to help shape and implement national policy and to solve state problems. NGA's Employment and Social Services division is a vehicle for sharing knowledge about innovative workforce development activities, exploring the impact of federal initiatives on state systems, and providing technical assistance to the states. 444 North Capitol Street, Washington, DC 20001-1512 ★ (202) 624-5427.

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) is an interagency coordinating committee whose members represent 10 Federal agencies involved in various aspects of the U.S. economy. NOICC and their state counterparts, the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICC) work together in a partnership to address workforce development and career preparation issues and opportunites. The focus of the NOICC/SOICC network is to help youth and adults link education and work through the career development process, and to facilitate the use of occupational, labor market, and career information by program planners and individuals making career decisions. 2100 M Street, NW, Suite 156, Washington, DC 20037 ★ (202) 653-5665.

National Skill Standards Board (NSSB), created by Title V of the Goals 2000 legislation, has been charged with promoting a "national strategy to enhance workforce skills, including school-to-work transition." The mission of the NSSB is to encourage the creation and adoption of a national system of skill standards which will enhance the ability of the United States to compete effectively in the global economy. 1441 L Street, Suite 9000, Washington, DC 20005-3521 ★ (202) 254-8628.

Publications

Grubb, W. Norton. *Centerfocus: Creating Coherent Workforce Preparation Systems From the Quagmire of Education and Job Training.* Number 13. Berkeley, CA: National Center for Research in Vocational Education, 1996.

Gruber, David A. *Toward a Seamless System for Youth Development: A New Strategy for Integrating Resources, Programs, and Institutions.* Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 1994.

Hyland, Jill. *Forging Partnerships Through Human Resource Investment Councils.* Washington, DC: National Governors' Association, 1996.

McCarthy, Karin, and Rebekah Lashman. *Workforce Development: Building Statewide Systems.* Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, National Conference of State Legislatures, 1994.

National Center on Education and the Economy. *Building a System to Invest in People: States on the Cutting Edge.* Washington, DC: National Center on Education and the Economy, 1995.

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Zinser, Jana. *State Education Funding Policies and School-to-Work Transition Programs for Dropouts and At-Risk Students: A Report Prepared for the National School-to-Work Office.* National Conference of State Legislatures, 1996.

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